The Arab Intellectual Free Youth University

Religious Sectarianism: The Scourge of the Age

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Sects, conflict, and abhorrent fighting; blood fills the alleys and roads, and a torn nation is devoured by the hyenas of politics in the name of religion. This is a scourge that has come to haunt the leaders of humanity and advocates of peace. The wise of the nation have long sought to find a way out of this impasse, hoping to uproot this plague that has ravaged our peoples and tampered with our history and civilization. "Sectarianism," as a jurisprudential term, refers to a collection of interpretive opinions by an Imam whose views were documented and liberated, followed by the interpretations of his followers according to his rules and principles. Undoubtedly, its linguistic meaning is the root of its name: "Al-Madhab" is a noun derived from the verb "Dahaba" (to go), meaning the path taken by the traveler. Thus, sectarianism is the path an individual follows, both literally and figuratively. The result of the above is that a sect is a walk according to popular heritage—interpreting religion based on the understanding of a scholar relying on the foundations of their sect. This issue of sects and their differences has long occupied the Islamic nation. We see that these differences did not arise recently, but the core of the dispute was once about clarifying the true meaning of religion (scientific disputes). Unfortunately, as is always the case, malevolent forces targeted these intellectual differences to take them away from their true essence. Many who call for division and the tearing apart of the nation began to favor one sect over another. Some even crossed these boundaries and began to declare others as disbelievers. Undoubtedly, the issue of "sectarian entitlement" has occupied a vast space among the ranks of the nation until many became obsessed with their sects, giving their own sect priority as if Islam were confined to it alone. This has produced a "new Islam" centered on bloodshed, terrorism, and injustice. Without a doubt, like all other conflicts, this sectarian struggle produced internal wars, led to division, and negatively affected the

upbringing of the youth by touching their feelings toward their religion and changing them according to the agendas of alleged sects.

I assert that for some, the issue of sectarianism has become a psychological matter more than a doctrinal or religious one, which has contributed to its deviation from its upright principle. When we take the Shia or Sufi sects as examples, we see that their issues have become psychological and far removed from their original and upright Islamic depth. Some, for instance, have become ready to sacrifice themselves so that their "sacred symbol"—which represents their sect—is not touched. The increase in symbolism within the concept of sects made it fertile ground for the variables of time and facilitated its change and deviation from its origins. In my opinion, we must remove the term "Symbol" from the religious concept and replace it with the term "Role Model." I also draw attention to the issue of "Psychological Sectarianism" that has occupied the minds of the youth to the point of infatuation and the rejection of everything that contradicts the sectarian belief they were raised on, even if it is proven that their sect is far from religion. One of the most important reasons is the insertion, deception, and manipulation of the most important sources relied upon by Muslims for political gains and worldly ambitions, things that our Holy Prophet separated from religion. The companions (may God be pleased with them all) were capable of dying of grief over the death of our Prophet, but they did not commit acts of "Psychological Sectarianism"; instead, they preserved themselves, their religion, the trust, and the covenant. As for changing sects for other motives, it has become common in the corridors of ruling palaces and social associations, and has even reached the thresholds of Arab and Islamic homes, making the "Sectarian Role Model" lose its value for some and turn into booklets to be discarded like scraps of paper.

It is imperative for us to reject all forms of sectarian division and its causes. We must be keen on rejecting the idea of "Symbolism" and replacing it with a "Role Model." Followers of sects must realize that their sanctification of specific individuals is extremely dangerous to the value of the individual as a human successor and a grave mistake. It is necessary to fight the worship of human idols.

People need a righteous, active, and dynamic role model who cares about the affairs of Muslims and interacts with the calamities, deviations, and conflicts they go through, not a sacred idol. It is the responsibility of every committed Muslim to reject innovations and myths added to the authentic religion and to beware of rushing toward rhetoric that calls for hatred and the exclusion of the other. The religion of Islam is a religion of humanity, mercy, love, and peace.

No doubt, every sect has symbols considered its pillars. This in itself is not harmful; the harm lies in dressing this symbol with absolute sanctity as if it were a revealed Quran or a revelation from heaven, where it is not permissible to discuss, let alone oppose or criticize him. Whoever does so is labeled as not a Muslim but outside the religion, and his blood is made permissible. This is truly regrettable, especially in an age where anyone can see the opinions of all scholars for themselves with a single click. Deception and manipulation no longer work on our current generation, thanks to God and the World Wide Web that liberated us from the fangs of the so-called "Clerics." This youthful scientific leap is a living example; we have begun to read and distinguish right from wrong with our minds without guardianship. Sectarianism is man-made, not God-made. Muhammad (PBUH) was not a Sunni or a Shia, but a monotheist Muslim on the path of Abraham, as were the People of the House and the companions. Every rational person must cast off the cloak of sectarianism and return to what our Prophet and his companions were—Muslims for God. No absolute sanctity exists except for God Almighty and those whose infallibility is proven. Beyond that, it is not permissible to dress others in the cloak of holiness. We respect their scientific status and their struggle, but we do not exaggerate them, nor do we declare those who disagree with them as disbelievers. They are humans who studied and worked hard, and they are subject to error and correctness. No matter how much their knowledge and intelligence reached, they will not reach the stage of perfection that gives us the justification for absolute sanctification. This is an unjustified exaggeration. There is a difference between being a scholar and being a god or infallible. No Muslim today says that scholars are infallible, so why do we stand as a solid barrier against anyone who comes with a new opinion or disagrees with the predecessors? This منهج is a satanic method to control and enslave minds, and a

suppression of thinking and development. Anyone who thinks of giving and seeks the salvation of their people, we cut their path and accuse them because they disagree with the "Sacred Symbol." We have come to sanctify individuals more than the prophets themselves. Instead of delivering the authentic voice of Muhammadan Islam to all of humanity, we drowned in the mud of sectarianism. Despite this bloody conflict, God blessed us with leaders of authentic Islamic thought who carried the nation's concerns. We see today among the conscious youth circles #The_Arab_Intellectual_Free_Youth_University, the humanitarian, cultural, and voluntary university that opened its doors to all and embraced youthful talents to unite the nation and spread peace and moderation to save the Islamic nation from this chronic disease. By this intellectual renewal and the upright missionary approach, we will have rid ourselves of what this sectarian scourge has produced, which has weighed on the chest of the nation for centuries.